

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The following sections describe the purpose and need and provide background information for this environmental assessment (EA).

1.1 PURPOSE AND NEED

The U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operation Office (DOE-RL) needs to provide cost-effective, additional personal protection and public safety through expanding training and equipment testing facilities at the Volpentest Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response Training and Education Center (HAMMER) on the Hanford Site.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Currently HAMMER, which began operation in September 1997, provides training for both radioactive and chemical hazardous response, firefighting, law enforcement, and occupational, safety, and health training (Figure 1). The mission for HAMMER is to host, broker, and provide training with its partners, involving the hands-on use of realistic props and settings to save lives and reduce injuries, increase personnel productivity, and serve as a catalyst for a regional training industry.

HAMMER began as a local community initiative based on the concept that one training center could serve both the Hanford Site and the region. From that beginning, HAMMER has grown to a national training resource and is well known for its unique partnering approach, its training facility, and its realistic props and simulations.

The original HAMMER was completed in June 1997 on 80 acres (32.3 hectares) of the original 120-acre (48.6-hectares) site. The remaining 40 acres (16.2 hectares) were reserved for future expansion. The existing 10,000-acre (4,047-hectare) Hanford Patrol Academy located immediately north of HAMMER was merged into HAMMER in September 1998. That portion was rededicated as the Law Enforcement and Security Training Center (LESTC). HAMMER operates LESTC in conjunction with the Hanford Patrol. LESTC also is available for use by outside agencies for training purposes. LESTC encompasses approximately 10,000 acres (4,047 hectares), which includes the current firing range and safety zones.

HAMMER currently consists of an administration and classroom building, burn house with computerized burn system, training support building, a number of large training pads for craft-specific and fire training, stream and pond, training tower, aboveground pipelines, various transportation props, a remediation/characterization site, confined space prop, simulated buried waste site, and a junction/diversion box with simulated tank prop.

1.2.1 Emergency Vehicle Operations Course

The Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) had been located on Port of Benton land at the old bus parking lot located north of the 1163 Building (the warehouse located at 2355 Stevens.) Recently, this space was leased to a commercial company. EVOC has suspended operations pending availability of a new site.

1.2.2 National Utility Training Services Site

The Northwest Public Power Association (NWPPA) is a non-profit association that has created partnerships with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and approximately 200 public utilities, including four local public utilities [Benton Public Utility District (PUD), Franklin PUD, City of Richland, and Douglas PUD], for the purpose of providing education and training services. The goal of NWPPA is to establish National Utility Training Services (NUTS) as a state-of-the-art training facility for line, substation, meter, and relay personnel, along with electricians, engineers, and office personnel.

The NWPPA would offer training through its NUTS site. The NUTS site would provide hands-on training for utility personnel throughout the western United States without jeopardizing power reliability or endangering personnel and equipment. Through the combined efforts of the NWPPA and its partners, the NUTS site would provide continuing education and state-of-the-art training to all utility personnel from entry level to journeymen.

The NUTS site consists of 80 acres (32.4 hectares) for use in connection with training equipment. Ownership of this 80 acres (32.4 hectares) is being transferred to the NWPPA. In addition, DOE-RL has granted an easement for road and utility access across an approximate 4-acre (1.6-hectare) parcel of land immediately south and between the property and Horn Rapids Road. This easement has been covered by other *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) of 1969 documentation.

1.2.3 Cold Test Facility

The U.S. Department of Energy, Office of River Protection (DOE-ORP) has established the River Protection Project (RPP) with the mandate to remediate and close the Manhattan Project and Cold War legacy waste tanks located on the Hanford Site (RPP-7502). Central to achieving this mandate would be the safe retrieval and transfer of the contents of these waste tanks. Retrieval and transfer systems must accommodate the difficult physical characteristics and hazardous nature of the contents. The newly constructed Cold Test Facility (CTF) adjacent to HAMMER provides a facility for testing of tank waste retrieval, transfer, and sampling hardware to be procured by the Single-Shell Tank Closure Project and the Double-Shell Tank Waste Delivery Project with nonhazardous materials. The construction and operation of CTF has been evaluated under separate NEPA documentation. Potential impacts of habitat mitigation for CTF are discussed in this EA for completeness.

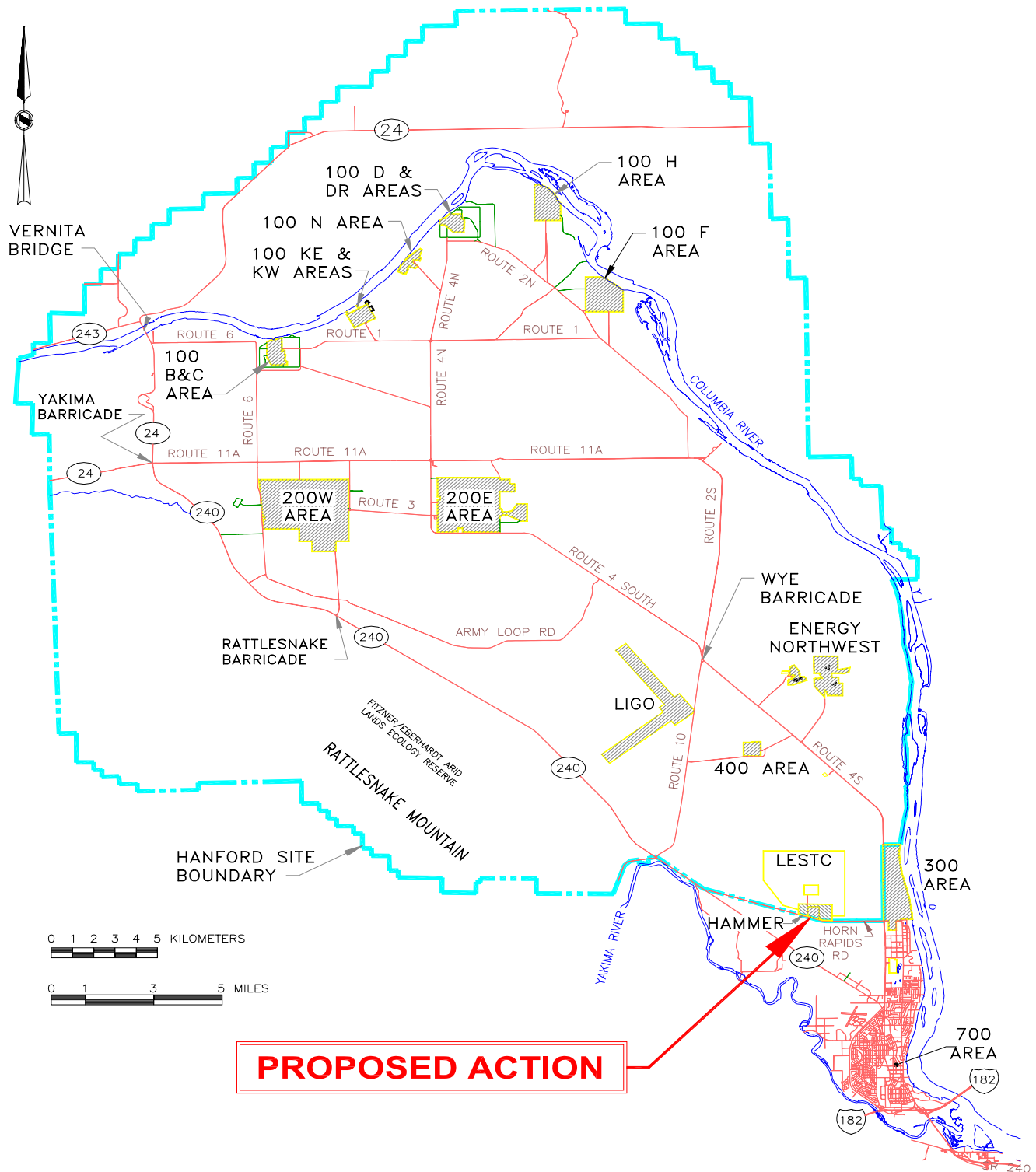


Figure 1. Hanford Site.

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